

# **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **2005: Fatality Free Year in Indiana's Underground Coal Mines**

**Indianapolis, IN February 9, 2006** – The Indiana Coal Council, in collaboration with Vincennes University and the Indiana Department of Labor (IDOL), is proud to recognize Indiana's underground coal mining industry and miners for a fatality free year in 2005. In a ceremony this afternoon at Vincennes University, Indiana's Commissioner of Labor, Miguel R. Rivera, Sr., on behalf of Governor Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., honored miners and their management for the excellent accomplishment.

"We are proud of Indiana's coal mining safety record. The success is due to the dedication of management and the skill of our outstanding Hoosier miners who make safety a priority everyday," said J. Nathan "Nat" Noland of the Indiana Coal Council.

The celebration was held at Vincennes University, Indiana's home for mine safety and technology training. Vincennes University has announced an associate degree program, being offered this fall and created to address the growing needs of Indiana's underground mining industry. Vincennes University President, Dr. Richard Helton reacted to the ceremony: "I am pleased that we are able to celebrate a fatality free year in mining in Indiana. The Vincennes University Miner Safety Training Program and those who are a part of this process will continue to be proactive in the promotion of safety for appropriate personnel in the mining industry. The safety of those in the mining industry is first and foremost, and continued efforts will be made to ensure a safe and secure environment for all miners."

State Representative Troy Woodruff (R-Vincennes) who helped bring the training program to fruition; represents parts of Daviess, Gibson, Knox, and Pike Counties, had this to say about the event: "Safety is paramount for this growing industry. I could not be more pleased with the commitment to the degree program and the potential it has to aid in economic development for not only my district but all over

southwestern Indiana. This program is addressing the need to invest in proactive safety measures for mines and the workers who risk their lives everyday.”

“Given the events of the last few weeks in West Virginia, it brings home just how important miner safety is,” said Commissioner Rivera. "It is certainly a priority for the Department of Labor and we are proud that Indiana mines are addressing the issue in such a responsible way. We are also thankful for the close relationship among the mining community, which includes not only the mining industry and the miners themselves, but also Vincennes University, the Indiana Coal Council and the Federal Mine Safety & Health Administration (MSHA). Working together, we can all make a difference.”

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics deaths at the Nation's coal mines fall under the top ten most dangerous jobs. In 2004, there were 28 deaths in the Nation's underground coal mines. This puts coal mining just ahead of work place deaths at nursing homes with 16 and just behind workplace deaths in hospitals with 29. Coal mining ranked significantly behind work place deaths for airline pilots, retail sales professionals, manufacturing workers, agriculture workers, truck drivers and construction workers. Indiana’s rate of injury and illness at underground mines are significantly less than the national average and the surrounding states of Kentucky and Illinois. Since 1993 there have been only three fatalities in Indiana’s underground mines.

For more information or if you have questions, please contact Quin Cheatham at 317.232.2655

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